

Butt Valley Dam, Gate Tender's Shed
Butt Valley Reservoir Road
Caribou Vicinity
Plumas County
California

HAER No. CA-189-C

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
BUTT VALLEY DAM, GATE TENDER'S SHED
HAER No. CA-189-C

Location: Butt Valley Dam
Butt Valley Reservoir Road
Caribou vicinity
Plumas County, California

U.S.G.S.: Caribou, 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle, 1979
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10 657960 E, 4441885 N

**Date of
Construction:** Unknown

Builder: Unknown

**Present Owner
And Occupant:** Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)
77 Beale Street
San Francisco, California 94106

Present Use: Storage

Significance: Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's Shed was built as part of a dam-related residential complex which also includes a gate tender's house, constructed in 1922-23, and a barn. The shed is significant as part of this complex which played an important role in the continued control of the Butt Valley hydroelectric power system.

**Report Prepared
by:** Tracy D. Bakic, Cindy L. Baker, and Mary L. Maniery
Cultural Resource Specialists
PAR Environmental Services, Inc.
1906 21st Street
Sacramento, California 95816

Date: November 1997

I. DESCRIPTION

Located in Plumas County, California, the Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's Shed is situated on a rise above the dam and is located to the southwest of the Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's House. The shed has a north-facing primary facade and is set on a gentle slope set amongst large pine trees. The shed is part of a small residential complex that also includes the gate tender's house and a barn (see HAER Nos. CA-189-A and CA-189-B for information about the house and barn).

The shed was probably built at the same time or shortly after the 1922-23 gate tender's house was built. The single-story rectangular shed was erected using construction methods and materials typical of the period and is connected with the house by way of a wooden walkway that leads from the south side of the house to the north side of the shed.

The shed is in fair condition considering its age. The windows have been broken, the original roof surfaces have likely been replaced, and many wood siding members are in a state of disrepair.

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Butt Valley Gate Tender's Shed is an 18-foot by 14-foot wood frame structure with a gable roof that is surfaced with corrugated-metal sheets. The north and south gable ends have fly rafters while the eaves at the east and west sides of the shed have exposed rafter tails. The shed is sided with vertical wood boards. Each board measures one-inch thick and between eight inches and nine inches in width (CA-189-C-1, CA-189-C-2, CA-189-C-3).

The front (north) facade consists of a doorway to its west and a small, square window opening to its east (CA-189-C-1). This single sash window had at one time contained six-light glazing. The muntins are still in place, but the glass is broken and no longer set in place. The east side of the structure consists of a large, centrally-placed, rectangular window opening (see attached plan of shed) (CA-189-C-3). This opening had been latched shut by a large board that was connected to the exterior bottom of the opening with hinges. The south side of the structure appears to have a small, square window opening that has been boarded shut and is located centrally within the gable area (CA-189-C-2). The shed was wired for electricity using porcelain knobs and tubes.

III. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The exact construction date of the Butt Valley Gate Tender's Shed is unknown, but it is likely that it was built circa 1922-23, the same time the Butt Valley Gate Tender's House was built, or shortly after. The shed, as well as the tender's house and a barn, was part of a dam-related

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residential complex which was set up as a result of events related to the development of hydroelectric power in the valley (see HAER No. CA-189 for contextual history of the hydroelectric system and Butt Valley Dam and HAER No. CA-189-A for information regarding the Butt Valley Gate Tender's House).

In 1902, the WPC began developing a hydroelectric system on the North Fork of the Feather River in Plumas County, California. The original system was designed to create two reservoirs; Lake Almanor and Butt Lake. Together they would provide a year-round water supply to power plants on the Feather River. After some initial construction, work was stalled until WPC was reincorporated in 1906 as the GWP (WPC 1902:n.p.; Wickman 1972:30).

As the demand for electricity surged during the 1910s, GWP made plans to expand their power generation capacities. They built a small dam and power plant at Butt Valley to generate power for the hydraulic sluicing used to create Almanor Dam. Water from Lake Almanor was fed by tunnel to Butt Valley to the southwest. By 1911, GWP had nearly 100 men working in the valley, 30 of whom had their families in residence there (Wickman 1972:30).

The GWP used the Butt Valley Hotel for their headquarters during dam construction and subsequent dam operation. The hotel became part of a town site known as Camp 5, which catered largely to GWP and also included a barn for workhorses, a hospital, a schoolhouse and a series of cottages. The old, two-story hotel was built by William and Lena Miller during the 1860s and was operated by the family until Lena sold their ranch to WPC in 1902. The hotel was used for many years to house some of GWP's employees, as well as construction firms they hired. By 1917, for example, GWP gate tender and flume patrolman Ben Goon (sometimes spelled Gung) and his family lived there (Kramar 1963:11-12, 19; Quadrio 1996) (see HAER No. CA-189-A for more information about Ben Goon and the gate tender's house).

The demand for electricity continued to grow during the 1910s. The firm of Stone and Webster was hired from 1919 to 1921 to build the Caribou Powerhouse downstream from Lake Almanor and to improve the Butt Lake storage capacity and dam. Further improvements to the dam in 1923 would eventually raise the reservoir to a level that covered the site of Butt Valley, also known as Camp 5, including the old Miller Hotel where Goon resided (Mardel 1933:n.p.; Quadrio 1996; Shoup and Cornford 1987:15, 17).

In 1923, the GWP hired Neils Schultz of the Schultz Construction Company of San Francisco to raise Butt Valley Dam to ensure a continued supply of water to Caribou. Many families left the valley with these improvements. Cottages, barns, the local school and the Butt Valley Hotel were salvaged and burned. Windows and hardware removed from the hotel were used in constructing a new two-story caretaker's, or gate tender's, house at Butt Valley. A barn was also moved near the new house from the area to be covered by the rising reservoir. Ben Goon and his family moved into the new house (Kramar 1963:19; Quadrio 1996). A shed, now known as the Butt Valley Gate Tender's Shed, was built and became part of this new residential complex.

The Butt Valley Gate Tender's Shed continued to be used, along with gate tender's house and barn, by GWP and later PG&E employees until the 1990s. It is now vacant and is owned by PG&E of California.

IV. SOURCES

A. Architectural Drawings:

No original architectural drawings for the building could be located at PG&E archives, headquarters or field offices.

B. Historic Maps and Views:

Anonymous

1933 Map depicting Butt Valley Dam and associated elements including the gate tender's house, shed, and barn. On file, PG&E, San Francisco, California.

C. Interviews:

Quadrio, Marilyn

1996 Telephone communication with Mary Maniery, PAR Environmental Services, Inc., April 30, 1996.

D. Bibliography:

Kramar, D. Glenn

1963 "Activities in the Butt Creek Area, From 1910 to 1921." In *Plumas Memories*, Plumas County Historical Society Publication No. 11, April 7, 1963. On file, Special Collections, Meriam Library, CSU Chico.

Mardel, C. M.

1933 *Great Western Power Company of California: History and Data* by C. M. Mardel. On file, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Francisco.

Shoup, Laurence H. and Daniel Cornford

1987 *The Caribou 1 Powerhouse: An Historic Overview and National Register of Historic Places Evaluation*. Prepared for Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Francisco.

Western Power Company (WPC)

1902 *Report of Construction at the End of October, 1902*. Western Power Company, Prattville. On file, WRCA, University of California, Berkeley.

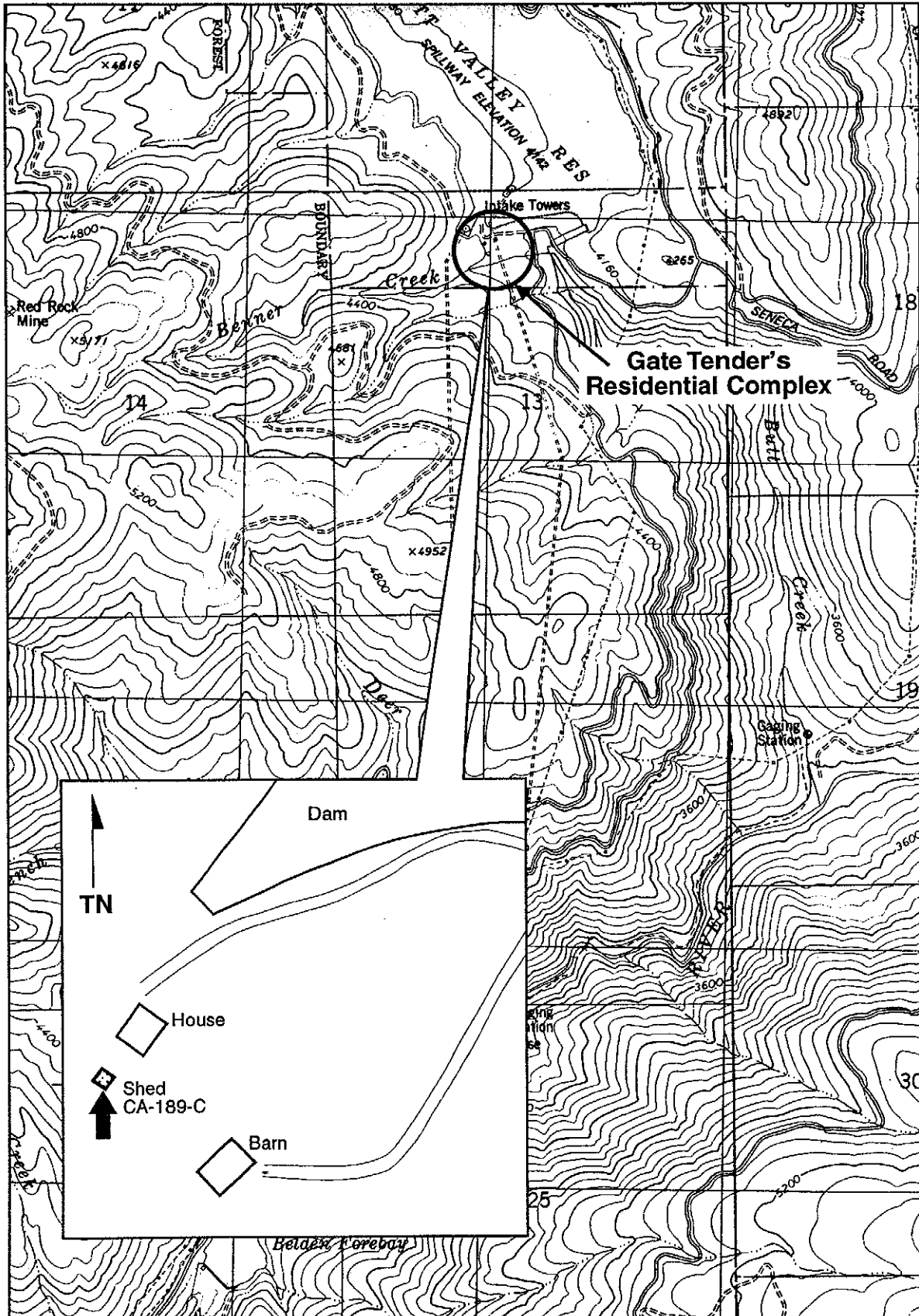
Wickman, Bill Herman

1972 *Man on the Lake Almanor Basin: A Study in Environmental Modification*. Thesis, Chico State College. On file, Special Collections, Meriam Library, California State University, Chico.

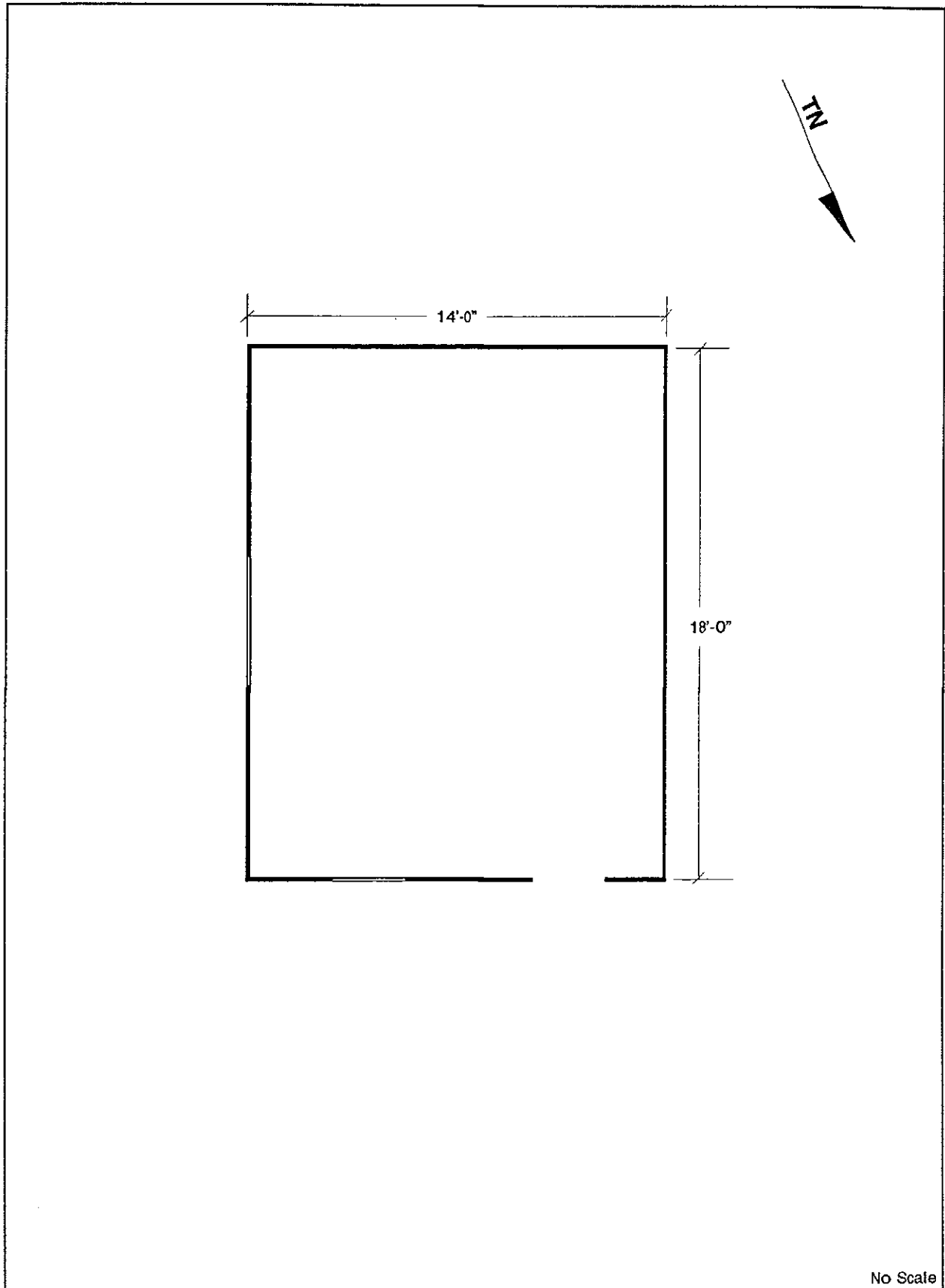
PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Butt Valley Gate Tender's Shed is part of a small complex of buildings owned by PG&E near the company's dam at Butt Valley Reservoir. PG&E is currently seismically retrofitting the Butt Valley Dam and intends to remove the shed. PG&E is recording the shed according to the HABS/HAER standards, and is filing documents with the State of California Office of Historical Preservation and the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California. This recordation has been prepared to meet those stipulations.

This report was compiled by Tracy D. Bakic with historical text prepared by Cindy L. Baker, Historian and architectural descriptions prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian. Floor plans were drafted in the field by Blossom Hamusek and were drawn by Claire Warshaw. The preceding are all employees of PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California. Documentation is based on previous investigations conducted by PAR Environmental Services entitled *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation of Butt Valley Dam, North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric System, Plumas County, California* (1996), and *State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Record Form and Building, Structure, and Object Record Form for PG&E Building 3869/Butt Valley Gate Tender's House* (1996).



Location Map and Site Plan (Inset) of Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's Shed
 (USGS: Caribou, CA, 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle 1979)



Plan of Shed
(Field Drawing by Blossom Hamusek and Final Drawing by Claire Warshaw, 1996)